

Understanding High Blood Pressure



What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your blood vessels, also known as arteries.

High blood pressure, also called hypertension, means the pressure in your arteries is higher than it should be. It can raise your chances of having serious health problems.

How do I know if I have high blood pressure?

Since high blood pressure may not have symptoms, using a machine to check your blood pressure is the only way to know if your numbers are in a healthy range.



Know your numbers to stay healthy

Blood pressure is recorded as 2 numbers:

- The **top** number is called **systolic**. It measures the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats.
- The **bottom** number is called **diastolic**. It measures the pressure in your arteries when your heart rests between beats.

Blood Pressure Category	Systolic (Top Number)		Diastolic (Bottom Number)
Normal	90-120	and	60-80
Elevated	120-129	and	60-80
High Blood Pressure Stage 1 (no other heart risk factors)	130-139	or	80-89
High Blood Pressure Stage 2 (with other heart risk factors)	140 or higher	or	90 or higher

Seek medical attention if your blood pressure is below 90/60 or above 130/80. Go to the emergency room if it is above 180/120.

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What can happen if high blood pressure is not treated?

Untreated high blood pressure may lead to serious health problems, such as:

- Heart attack
- Vision problems and blindness
- Kidney damage
- Stroke

Who is more likely to get high blood pressure?

You are more likely to have high blood pressure if you:

- Have a family history of high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes
- Are not physically active
- Use tobacco products
- Have an unhealthy diet
- Are overweight or obese
- Drink too much alcohol

What can I do to manage high blood pressure?



Talk to Your Doctor

- See your doctor and get your blood pressure checked at least once a year.
- Work with your doctor to set blood pressure numbers that are healthy for you.
- Ask your doctor about blood pressure medicine.
- If you are stressed, ask your doctor for help.



Take Control

- Eat a healthy diet, reducing salt (sodium) and alcohol.
- Quit smoking to help improve your health.
- Be active for at least 30 minutes each day.
- Avoid fried food to help keep a healthy weight.



Take Medicine

- Take your blood pressure medicine as ordered by your doctor. This helps keep your numbers at healthy levels.
- Do not stop taking your blood pressure medicine without talking to your doctor first.



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